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MONSTRESS
image
ISSUE 18

MONSTRESS™ ISSUE 18

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THE MONSTRESS STORY SO FAR...

Where Maika Halfwolf goes, destruction follows. After their trip to the Isle of Bones, Zinn, the Monstrum that lives inside of Maika, devoured the crew of a Thyrian ship. This, combined with the attack on the Thyrian Blood Queens by Inquisitrixes, put the Thyrian armed forces on high alert – and hot on Maika's trail.

After a narrow escape from Thyrian waters, Maika was offered refuge in the safe harbor city of Pontus in exchange for her promise to activate the famed city-wide Pontus Shield. When her first attempt failed, Maika and Zinn set off on a mission to find replacement shield parts. By the time they returned, Thyrian soldiers had already arrived, and the war had begun. But the danger of that battle paled in comparison to the threat posed by the Inquisitrix Gull, whose activation of two enchanted mask fragments at once created a rift in the sky through which an ancient and powerful Monstrum began to emerge.

Meanwhile, Kippa, Maika's most loyal ally, is quickly approaching a different kind of danger. When Gull attacked the refugee fox Arcanics that Kippa had been helping in Pontus, Master Ren pulled her away to safety – but unbeknownst to Kippa, Ren has been ordered to bring her to his employers, whose motivations, though unknown, are almost certainly insidious...

THE PLAYERS...

MAIKA An Arcanic teen who survived the Great War, and slavery at the hands of the Cumaean witch nuns. Ruthless and haunted, she is determined to uncover the truth behind her mother's murder — and her mother's secrets — in the hope that she can free herself from an ancient and dangerous god called a Monstrum that is imprisoned inside her body and fills her with an otherworldly hunger for human flesh. In her current possession are two clues to her past: a photograph, and a fragment of a mask that many would kill to possess.

ZINN A mysterious, primordial Monstrum of tremendous power that shares Maika's body and mind, and fights her for control. Once considered a god, and drawn into this world by the Shaman-Empress, this Monstrum is driven by a deadly hunger, consuming the lives of humans and Arcanics alike, leaving only their desiccated corpses behind. Though it may give the impression that its only wish is to survive, there's far more to this creature, and its desires, than meets the eye…

KIPPA An Arcanic fox girl saved from slavery by Maika. Innocent and optimistic, she is frightened by the Monstrum — but trusts Maika and will bravely defend her and others by rushing into battles too dangerous for a child.

REN An enigmatic nekomancer cat with mysterious motives, he is one of Maika's companions on her journey, and perhaps an agent of the Dusk Court — or some greater power.

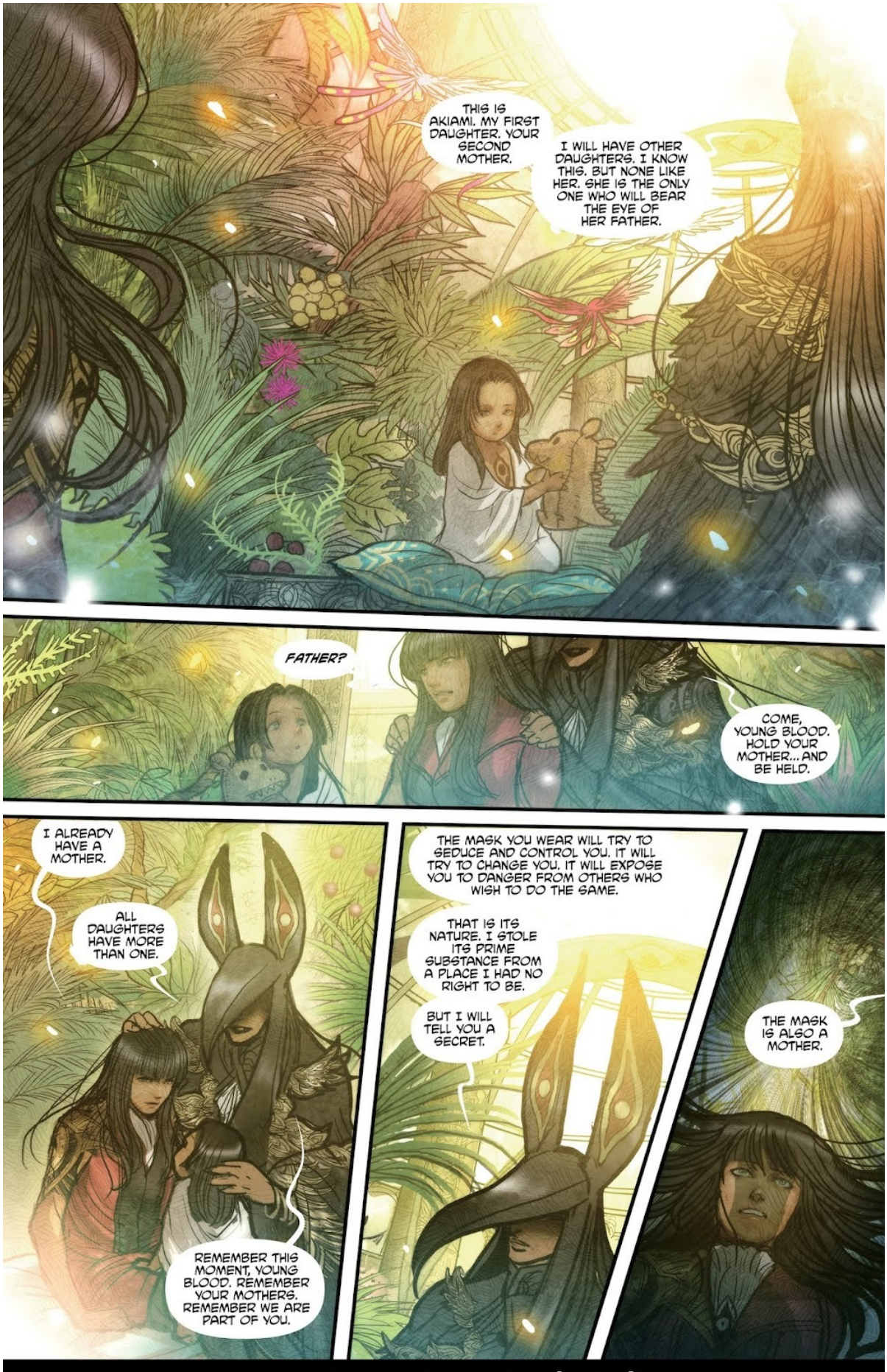
SHAMAN-EMPRESS The first and most powerful Arcanic who ever lived, a sciencemaster of the highest order and Zinn's beloved. Maika is her direct descendant, and bears her Mark of the Eye.

AAIIEEE!
FUUUCK!
IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND AS TO STOP GLARING AT ME, SHIELD MASTER.
ARE YOU CERTAIN THE SHIELD WILL FUNCTION WITH THAT CONFIGURATION?
ARE YOU CERTAIN I CAN FIX IT WITH YOU DISTRACTING ME?
...TRICKSTER... YOU DECEIVED... THESE MORTALS... INTO BELIEVING THE SHIELD... COULD BE REPAIRED...
AND IT CAN, MOST ANCIENT OF SHADOWS.
BUT YOU KNOW ALL TOO WELL THAT BROKEN THINGS ARE NEVER THE SAME AGAIN.
HELP ME.
YOU SHOULD REMEMBER HOW TO REPAIR HER INVENTIONS, EVEN BETTER THAN I.
...YOU PRESUME... TOO MUCH...
...NOTHING WE DO HERE... WILL STOP... WHAT IS COMING...
SLY ONE.
STOPPING THE END OF THE WORLD WAS NEVER THE SHAMAN-EMPRESS'S PLAN.

YOU SWORE AN OATH, CORVIN.
FIND KIPPA.
AS YOU WISH.
THE GODDESS PROTECT YOU, LADY HALFWOLF.
THE GODDESS CAN GO FUCK HERSELF.
THE MASKS OPENED THAT RIFT IN THE SKY...
BASTARDS...
BASTARDS...
WHAT IF THEY CAN CLOSE IT?
NYAAAHH!
NNGH...
...ONE...
...MORE...

...DO NOT DESPAIR... STAND STRONG...
OOF!
SHHLUUP
...ZINN... MAKE THEM STOP...
...PLEASE... MASTERS... FREE US...
ZINN?
OOOHMMMMMHHMM
AH, THERE YOU ARE.
!!GASP!!

IT'S BEEN SOME TIME SINCE WE MET, YOUNG BLOOD.
I'M PLEASED YOU SURVIVED THE SIEGE. YOU WERE SO MAD WITH GRIEF I FEARED YOU'D DO YOURSELF HARM.
AH. BUT THAT HASN'T HAPPENED YET, HAS IT?
THE OTHER YOU WAS... OLDER.
WHO... WHO ARE YOU?
YOUR FIRST MOTHER.
AND YOU... MY LAST DAUGHTER.
COME. IF THIS IS THE FIRST TIME YOU REMEMBER MEETING ME, THEN THERE'S SOMEONE ELSE YOU MUST SEE.


THIS IS AKIAMI. MY FIRST DAUGHTER. YOUR SECOND MOTHER.
I WILL HAVE OTHER DAUGHTERS. I KNOW THIS. BUT NONE LIKE HER. SHE IS THE ONLY ONE WHO WILL BEAR THE EYE OF HER FATHER.
FATHER?
COME, YOUNG BLOOD. HOLD YOUR MOTHER... AND BE HELD.
I ALREADY HAVE A MOTHER.
ALL DAUGHTERS HAVE MORE THAN ONE.
REMEMBER THIS MOMENT, YOUNG BLOOD. REMEMBER YOUR MOTHERS. REMEMBER WE ARE PART OF YOU.
THE MASK YOU WEAR WILL TRY TO SEDUCE AND CONTROL YOU. IT WILL TRY TO CHANGE YOU. IT WILL EXPOSE YOU TO DANGER FROM OTHERS WHO WISH TO DO THE SAME.
THAT IS ITS NATURE. I STOLE ITS PRIME SUBSTANCE FROM A PLACE I HAD NO RIGHT TO BE.
BUT I WILL TELL YOU A SECRET.
THE MASK IS ALSO A MOTHER.

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MOTHER?
...THERE IS... NO MOTHER... BUT YOU... ARE ONE...OF US... I CAN SMELL IT... IN YOU...
WHAT...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
...DO YOU WISH... TO HAVE YOUR MIND... OBLITERATED...
THE THINGS I SAW...
...HALLUCINATIONS... NO DOUBT...
HOW DID THE ANCIENTS BAR YOU FROM THIS WORLD?
...EVEN THE BELOVED... COULD NOT... BE CERTAIN...
...WE SUSPECT... THEY HAD... HELP...
...ZINN...

...I WAS BETRAYED... OUR SISTER-BROTHER SEIZED ME... THROUGH THE MASK. TOOK OVER MY MIND.
NOT EVEN A SCION OF THE FALLEN HOUSES BUT ONE OF THE DEFILED.
I WILL NEVER FORGIVE THAT VIOLATION!
I WILL NEVER FORGIVE!
NEVER!
STAY DOWN, OR I'LL KILL YOU.
KRRAK
YOU CAN KILL ME AFTER I DESTROY THE DEFILED.
WE'LL ALL BE DEAD ANYWAY IF YOU DON'T POWER THE DEVICE, HALFWOLF. RIGHT NOW.
COME, STRAP IN.

THE THYRIANS ARE FLEEING.
MAYBE WE SHOULD DO THE SAME.
THERE'S NO RUNNING FROM THIS.
NOW WE TRULY FIND OUT WHAT WE'RE MADE OF.
SIGNAL ALL OUR SHIPS TO CLOSE ON PONTUS.

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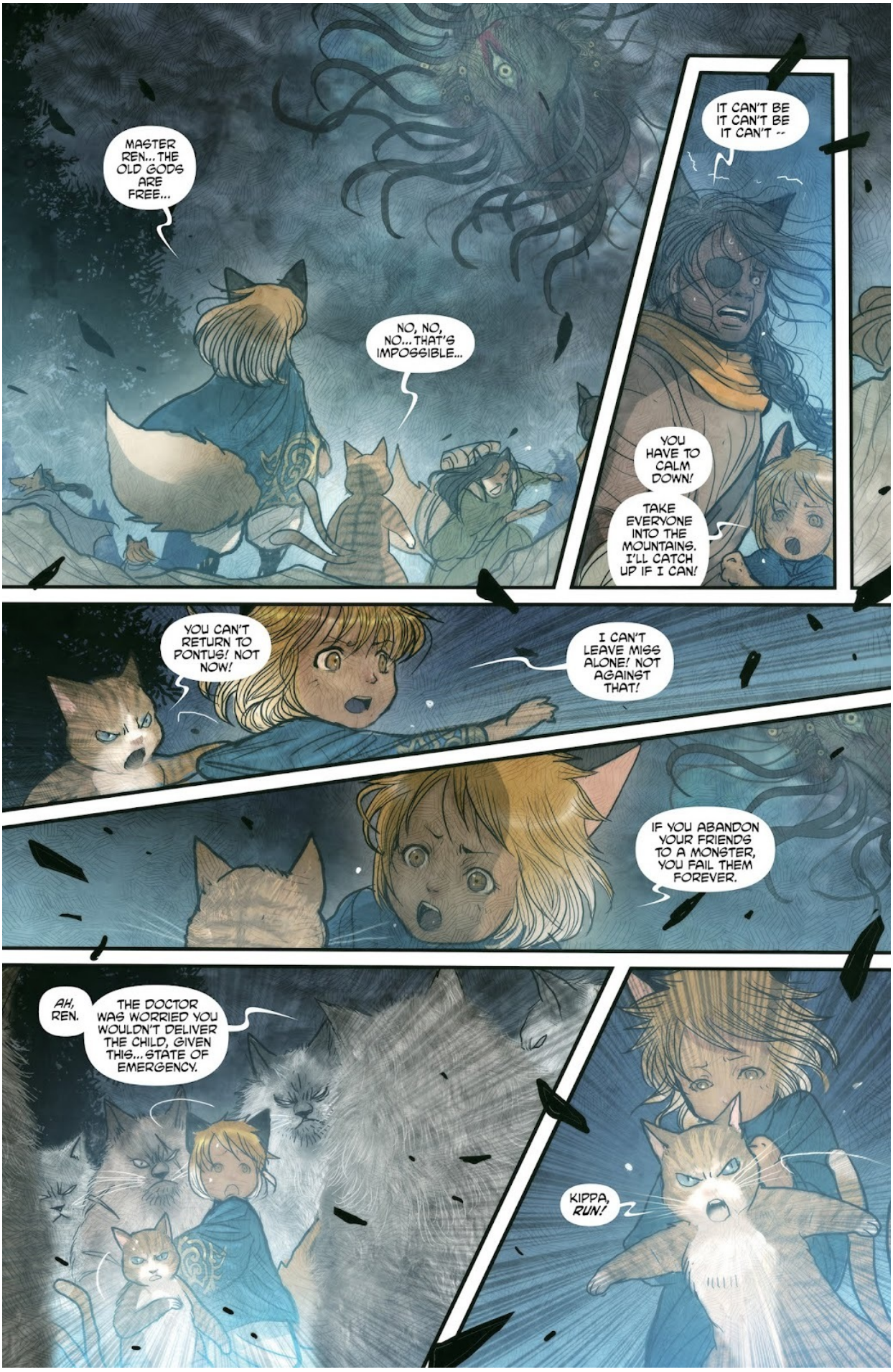
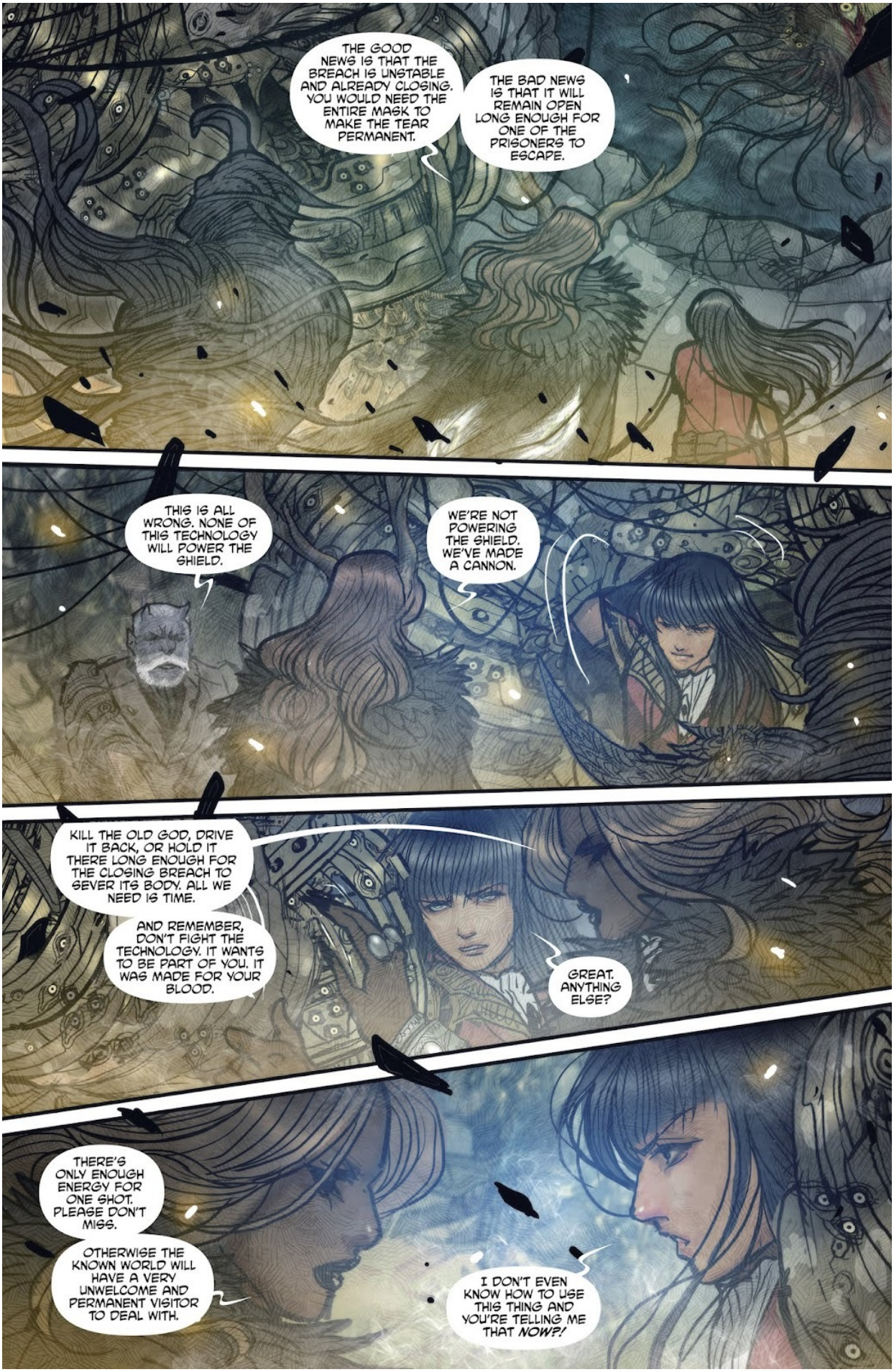

MASTER REN... THE OLD GODS ARE FREE...
NO, NO, NO... THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE...
IT CAN'T BE IT CAN'T BE IT CAN'T --
YOU HAVE TO CALM DOWN!
TAKE EVERYONE INTO THE MOUNTAINS. I'LL CATCH UP IF I CAN!
YOU CAN'T RETURN TO PONTUS! NOT NOW!
I CAN'T LEAVE MISS ALONE! NOT AGAINST THAT!
IF YOU ABANDON YOUR FRIENDS TO A MONSTER, YOU FAIL THEM FOREVER.
AH, REN.
THE DOCTOR WAS WORRIED YOU WOULDN'T DELIVER THE CHILD, GIVEN THIS... STATE OF EMERGENCY.
KIPPA, RUN!


THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THE BREACH IS UNSTABLE AND ALREADY CLOSING. YOU WOULD NEED THE ENTIRE MASK TO MAKE THE TEAR PERMANENT.
THE BAD NEWS IS THAT IT WILL REMAIN OPEN LONG ENOUGH FOR ONE OF THE PRISONERS TO ESCAPE.
THIS IS ALL WRONG. NONE OF THIS TECHNOLOGY WILL POWER THE SHIELD.
WE'RE NOT POWERING THE SHIELD. WE'VE MADE A CANNON.
KILL THE OLD GOD, DRIVE IT BACK, OR HOLD IT THERE LONG ENOUGH FOR THE CLOSING BREACH TO SEVER ITS BODY. ALL WE NEED IS TIME.
AND REMEMBER, DON'T FIGHT THE TECHNOLOGY. IT WANTS TO BE PART OF YOU. IT WAS MADE FOR YOUR BLOOD.
GREAT. ANYTHING ELSE?
THERE'S ONLY ENOUGH ENERGY FOR ONE SHOT. PLEASE DON'T MISS.
OTHERWISE THE KNOWN WORLD WILL HAVE A VERY UNWELCOME AND PERMANENT VISITOR TO DEAL WITH.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO USE THIS THING AND YOU'RE TELLING ME THAT *NOW*?!

IT'S ALMOST THROUGH.
I'M GOING TO SHOOT.
IF YOU SHOOT BEFORE THE MACHINE IS FULLY POWERED, THE RESULTS COULD BE DISASTROUS.
WE WON'T MAKE IT. WE WON'T MAKE--
CHRNKK
CHKK
CHNKK
CHOM
CHOM
FIRE! FIRE!
KEEP FIRING! OR WE ALL DIE!
...AH... LOOK HOW IT FLINCHES..
...IT HAS BEEN... A LONG TIME... SINCE THEY FELT PAIN... EVEN THE MILDEST... OF STINGS...

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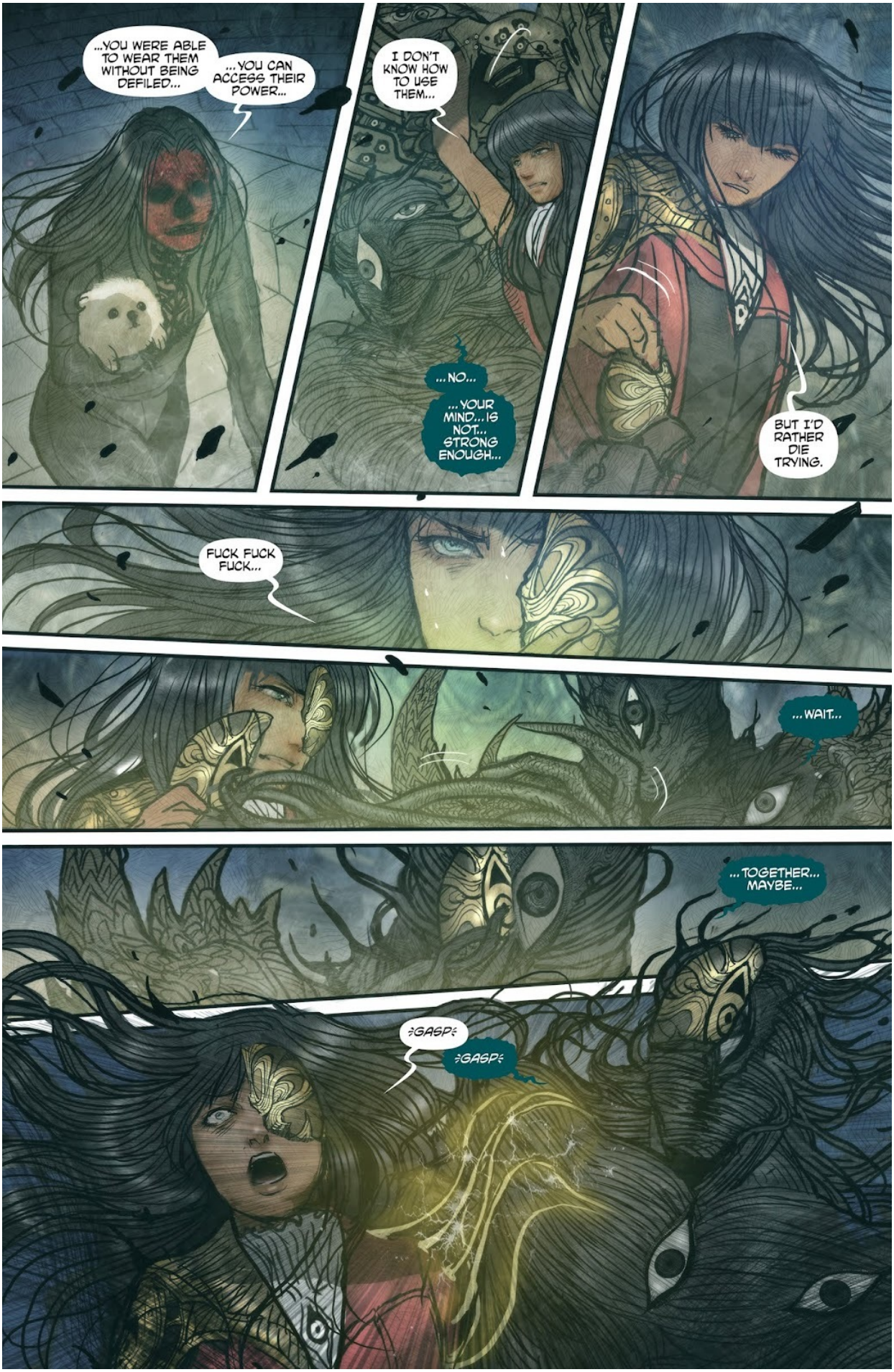
...YOU WERE ABLE TO WEAR THEM WITHOUT BEING DEFILED...
...YOU CAN ACCESS THEIR POWER...
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO USE THEM...
...NO...
...YOUR MIND... IS NOT... STRONG ENOUGH...
BUT I'D RATHER DIE TRYING.
FUCK FUCK FUCK...
...WAIT...
...TOGETHER... MAYBE...
:GASP:
:GASP:

NNGGGH!
BOOM!

THE DAMAGE TO THE FIFTH WARD IS SIGNIFICANT. SO ARE THE FATALITIES.
AND PONTUS HAS LOST ITS SHIELD. WE'RE VULNERABLE NOW.
IT COULD HAVE BEEN FAR WORSE. IT COULD HAVE BEEN THE END OF THE WORLD.
YOU SAVED US ALL, MAIKA. YOU'RE A HERO.
I'M NO FUCKING HERO.
HE DIDN'T SAY YOU WERE A GOOD PERSON. HE SAID YOU WERE A HERO. THERE'S A DIFFERENCE.
ALL I KNOW IS THAT THE WAR BETWEEN HUMANS AND ARCANICS IS FUCKING BULLSHIT COMPARED TO WHAT WE JUST FOUGHT BACK.

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ANYONE FAMILIAR?
...ALL ARE... BLOOD...
...WHERE IS THE SISTER-BROTHER... WHO HAD THE MASKS...?
GONE. WE DON'T KNOW WHERE.
LADY HALFWOLF.
THE FOX CHILD HAS BEEN ABDUCTED. I MARKED THE TRAIL BUT I'LL NEED HELP IF I'M TO LIBERATE HER.
REN, WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE'S KIPPA?
HE'S SPOKEN ONLY ONE WORD SINCE I FOUND HIM.
"FAMILY."

TO BE CONTINUED...

MONSTRESS MAIL & FAN ART

Dear Readers,

We've reached the end of the third arc. I've been dreaming about this last issue for years. I'm hoping you enjoyed reading it as much as Sana and I enjoyed creating it.

To all of you who read MONSTRESS and recommend it and pass it on to your friends, for all the comic book retailers and book sellers, thank you so much for supporting MONSTRESS. We would never have made it this far without you.

I plan to bring a copy of the arc to my grandparents' graves in Vancouver. Ni-Ni and Yeh-Yeh, I hope you enjoy it.

You inspired it, after all.

- ML

Dear Ms. Liu and Takeda, and the rest of the team:

I just binged your series for the first time and I am in love. Both of you are top-tier in your crafts (*X-23* for Marvel is my favorite series of all time) and MONSTRESS is the gift that keeps on giving!! It's definitely one of my favorite Image comics. I love the heroes! I love Kippa! I love the diversity! I love the style and how the gods are drawn! I love Maika and everything she stands for! I'm so happy this is ongoing, and that you guys are still running with it!!

Love and loyalty from your new devout follower,
A.
United States

Dear Marjorie,

I always find myself wanting to write letters like these, but I can never find the right words to express my appreciation and gratitude for the work you and Sana do. I ordered the first volume of MONSTRESS online after reading the premise and seeing previews of the art. As my comic book pull list grew larger, I promised myself that I would be a trade-waiter for this series.

However, I was so enthralled by this book after reading the first volume, that I decided to start picking up the single issues; MONSTRESS is the one and only book that I have broken the trade wait for—it's just that good! The mystical world-building, the mysterious yet complex array of characters, as well as Sana's amazing art and design—I love it all! I'm always looking forward to what you have in store for all of us. Much thanks and much love!

Love,
Noel B.

Dear Marjorie Liu,

My name is John, I'm 20 years old, I'm an aspiring writer and I live in Greece. I've decided to contact you because recently I bought and read MONSTRESS Issue 7 and it's been a really long time since I've read such a GREAT comic book. I bought it because the artwork caught my attention and I liked the fact that the book was dealing with fantasy. As I expected, the illustrations and the colors were absolutely amazing. What I didn't expect was to find an amazingly crafted, detailed, original story full of good messages.

I think that what makes a good writer isn't only the story they try to tell but also what morals they put into it, and you've certainly managed that (in only one issue—can't wait to read the series as a whole). So you are a great writer. Overall, I wish you the best and good luck with your book.

With great admiration and respect,
John

Hello!

First off, I want to say that in 35+ years of reading comics, this is the very first time I have ever written a letter to the comic creators.

I want to thank you so very much for this incredible story, this fantastic art, & this amazing world that you have created & are kind enough to share with us, the readers.

I just finished #12, & tomorrow I'll go to my LCS, The Comic Book Shop, to get Issue #13. I am so excited! I read the current 12 issues one right after the other. I had never heard of your work until a couple weeks ago, when I happened upon a Facebook link to a blog that talked about how awesome this story is & showed a couple inside pages.

So I went to my LCS, & amazingly, they had all 12 issues, 1st prints, in stock! I snagged them right away. Am I ever glad I did! I cannot even begin to explain how amazed I am by your storytelling & art!

All I can say is THANK YOU! Keep up the fantastic work!

Best Regards,
Bradford Z.

A, Noel, John, and Bradford: Thank you all so much for picking up MONSTRESS and sharing your thoughts. We're so glad you like the book enough to send such kind words, and we hope you'll continue to enjoy what we have up our sleeves!

- JMS

Send letters & fan art to:
monstress.comic@gmail.com!
#monstress on Twitter and Instagram!

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